

THE FACTS ON GREGOIRE'S ECONOMIC LEADERSHIP

The Thursday, Sept. 26, 2008, article in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, "Business group to host Gregoire-Rossi debate," includes inaccurate and misleading information that needs to be clarified.

The facts are:

- As corrected in today's Post-Intelligencer, the governor did not say the state has created "over 250,000 new jobs." She said the state created "250,000 new jobs" since 2005. This number is based on a recent report from the state Employment Security Department showing that non-farm employment numbers have increased by 247,300 since January 2005.
- State figures for August 2008 show 200,334 unemployed people in Washington — not 209,000 as reported in the article. By comparison, there were 203,600 unemployed in the state when the governor took office, so the number of unemployed people in Washington state has actually shrunk. In fact, the state's jobless rate reached near-record lows last year before the national economic slowdown.
- The article, in stating that "all told, taxes have increased by \$600 million," fails to take into account the governor's reduction of unemployment insurance and workers compensation taxes by more than \$500 million since 2005. That leaves less than \$100 million in tax increases, and if you exclude the voter-approved estate tax, the net tax *decrease* is more than \$240 million.
- Workers compensation costs are not the "third-highest payout in America." Workers benefits and what employers pay in workers comp premiums are two different rankings. Workers comp insurance premiums in Washington are among the lowest in the nation for employers. Employees pay 25 percent of the total premium costs. This means that the employers' portion of workers comp rates are low — only seven states have lower rates. Therefore, Washington has some of the best benefits and the lowest costs. While the workers compensation rate rose by 44.5 percent between 2002 and 2005 under Gov. Gregoire's leadership, the rate has increased only 4.2 percent.
- There is no data, including from the federal government, to support the claim that Washington ranks the highest in the country for unemployment insurance rates. The fact is that as the unemployment system varies greatly from state to state, there is no comparable data.